

April 10, 1961

Secretary Dean Rusk
Secretary of State
Washington, D. C.

Dear Secretary Rusk:

If our aid programs for less fortunate countries are to achieve their maximum usefulness, greater attention must be given to the improvement of Agriculture and a more adequate training of specialists in this field. In the discussion which follows only Latin America will be considered, though any suggestions having merit would also have some degree of applicability in other areas.

The possibility of increasing food production in Latin America has been amply demonstrated by the Rockefeller Foundation Program in Mexico and Colombia. This has been a 2-phase program involving agricultural research and the training of nationals. The latter has been at two levels: participation in local programs, under the supervision of U. S. personnel; and the granting of Fellowships to a selected group for graduate training in the United States. Effective as the Fellowship program has been it has failed to satisfy the expanding need for trained personnel. Even though unlimited funds were available for graduate study fellowships, the U. S. Universities could not absorb and do justice to the numbers that would be required.

An alternative possibility appears to offer more promise. This would involve a logical extension of the University contract relationship now sponsored by I. C. A. Latin America does not suffer from a lack of Universities. Rather it has a surplus, at least in Agriculture, a surplus so great that no one institution receives the support needed to secure and maintain a staff of high caliber and to adequately perform its teaching and research activities. None of the Universities are adequately staffed to give graduate degrees in Agriculture.

You are, no doubt, aware of the recent plans of the Rockefeller Foundation to assist in developing a graduate training and research program at the National School of Agriculture, Chipango, Mexico. I have been working closely with Dr. E. J. Wellhausen, Associate Director of the Rockefeller Foundation in charge of the Inter-American Maize Program, in the research phase of this endeavor. Dr. G. F. Sprague, Head of Corn and Sorghum Investigations, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Agriculture Research Service, Dr. Barbara McClintock, Carnegie Institution of Washington at Cold Spring Harbor, New York, and other scientists are also actively participating in advising with Dr. Wellhausen on research plans and the training of Latin American graduate students. Those of us who had even limited contact with this development believe it has merit and should be expanded to include other countries.

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The proposal would involve the selection of two or three institutions in Latin America and extend the present assistance program to include graduate student training. Obviously the choice of institutions would involve whole-hearted local support. La Molina in Peru might be one such possibility. Additional staff of U. S. personnel would be required in the early phases of such a program and possibly the opportunity for graduate student training might initially have to be restricted to certain specific subject matter areas. Extension to other subject matter areas would develop as facilities and other circumstances warranted.

Such a program has several possible advantages. It would ensure that the emphasis of training and the choice of thesis research projects be geared to problems of local importance. Results obtained would therefore be more readily incorporated into agricultural practice. Second, local graduate training at the Master of Science level, or its equivalent, would provide an excellent screen for the selection of those individuals having the potential and the desire to continue graduate training in the United States. Such a program should permit a rapid expansion in numbers of trained personnel and ensure that those best qualified to benefit from further graduate training were selected for any fellowships currently available.

It is important to develop centers of training and research with excellence and recognition within the foreign countries. The development of this plan should lead to increased prestige of their scientists and for local support of the institutions. Not only would they provide much of the advanced training now required in the United States but employment for their capable young scientists.

Very truly yours,



H. F. Robinson, Head
Department of Genetics

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cc: Dr. G. F. Sprague
Dr. Barbara McClintock